

Washington, D.C. - With support from Rep. Peter Welch, the U.S. House dealt President George Bush the first veto override of his presidency.

The Senate is also expected to override the vetoed Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), H.R. 1495, later this week.

"President Bush is completely out of touch with the American public and the Congress they elected. With the president threatening to veto bills ranging from children's health care to ending the war to funding key domestic priorities, I hope this is the first of many times a bipartisan consensus in Congress successfully rejects his misguided priorities," said Welch after supporting the override.

In addition to WRDA, President Bush has vetoed the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) reauthorization, stem cell research legislation, and legislation that would have required the withdrawal of troops from Iraq to begin by October. Until today, Republicans in Congress have blocked a presidential veto override.

"This legislation provides much-needed investments to protect our environment and improve our dams and other water infrastructure," Welch added. "By insisting that Army Corps projects go through transparent and rigorous review, we help assure worthy they benefit the public, protect the environment, and save taxpayer dollars."

The WRDA bill authorizes nearly \$23 billion for the construction or study of water projects over the next 15 years by the Army Corps of Engineers, to enhance navigation systems, flood control, ecosystem restoration, and for other projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States.

The bill includes an amendment by Welch and House colleagues Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Thomas Petri (R-WI) to improve oversight of Army Corps of Engineers water infrastructure projects. The Blumenauer-Welch-Petri Amendment updates the Army Corps of Engineers principles and guidelines to help ensure that future projects are environmentally, structurally, and fiscally sound. The principles and guidelines have not been updated since 1983.

Among other Vermont projects, the bill authorizes streambank protection for the Wells River and aquatic ecosystem restoration for the White River.

The bill also amends language that will now allow the Nature Conservancy to cost-share projects with the Corps for the Connecticut River.

Under the previous leadership, the 107th, 108th and 109th Congresses each failed to enact a water resources bill.